

Ultramax Triathlon

Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri

September 27, 2003

General comments

- This was the event I was preparing for over the past year. All of the training and the events done in the previous twelve months were done with a focus on this one event.
- I was a volunteer at the inaugural Ultramax on September 28, 2002, and was so inspired by what I saw that day that I decided that very evening to enter the 2003 event as a participant. I started training for it the very next day.
- Over the course of the last twelve months, I ran over 800 miles, cycled over 3000 miles (700 of them on the bicycle that was delivered 7 months earlier), and swam about 75 miles.
- I was planning to do some long bike rides and runs in the first two weeks of September to finish my preparation. The weather in August was just too hot to do these long training sessions. Unfortunately, after coming home from a 9-mile run on Sunday, August 31, and after just getting on the indoor exercise bike, I received a call that Warren was in the hospital after getting hit by a car while riding his bicycle. I immediately packed to go to St. Louis later in the day and drove to Pensacola the following day. I didn't do any training while in Pensacola. I returned on September 11th. I was very concerned as to whether I would be physically prepared to do Ultramax because of the training layoff. I trained harder than I had planned to in the two weeks before Ultramax in order to make up for it. I still don't know how much the layoff may have set me back.
- I was well rested and felt mentally prepared when race day arrived.

Pre-race nutrition/hydration

- I ate pasta for dinner on Wednesday and Thursday. I would have had it again on Friday except that I needed to do some shopping and wanted to get home before an approaching storm hit the Lake area.
- I ate lots of fruit during the last several days before the race and, on the day before the race, I drank lots of water and Gatorade and ate salty snacks, including pretzels, peanut butter and crackers, and sunflower kernels.
- On the morning of the race, I ate a bowl of cereal with banana and orange juice at 4:30 a.m.—three hours before the start. About an hour before the race began, I ate a PowerBar and kept drinking from my water and Gatorade bottles.
- Before leaving for the race at 5:45 a.m., I took two Aleve, two Endurolytes and one Enduro Cap.
- I think my pre-race nutrition-hydration strategy was good.

Race week training

- Sunday: None
- Monday: 5-mile easy run
- Tuesday: 15-mile easy bike ride
- Wednesday: 1,600-yard open water swim
- Thursday & Friday: None

Gear

- I wore a sleeveless top with my wetsuit bottom. The water temperature was about 74 degrees, and the sleeveless top was perfect for this temperature. The air temperature at the start of the swim was probably around 55 degrees.
- On the bike, I carried a spare tube, Endurolytes, Carbo Pro (which I never used), some PowerBars and peanut butter & crackers. I put some cookies, a bagel, and a chocolate bar in my special needs bag, but never took them. I wore a cycling jersey, cycling shorts and socks, and felt comfortable all throughout the bike. At the start of the bike, the air temperature was about 60 degrees. The highest temperature on race day was about 72 degrees.
- For the run, I wore a short-sleeved polyester shirt, running shorts, socks and my Rudy Project hat. I wore a support brace on my right knee. I carried a sweat towel. In the special needs bag, I put my long-sleeve polyester Brooks running jersey, a discardable cotton t-shirt, some snacks and a disposable camera. I put on the Brooks jersey because it was getting cool in the dark. Everything worked great, and I was comfortable throughout the run.

Weather

- The weather was perfect except for the wind and a very brief rain shower. From late morning until late afternoon, northwest winds from 10-20 mph really affected us on the bike segment north of Eldon on CC and especially going west on C—basically from miles 32 to 70. The tailwind on the return only seemed to help when traveling eastbound on C.

Race nutrition/hydration

- I noticed some hip pain around the midpoint of the bike, so I took an Aleve. It worked great.
- The swallowed air from the swim segment caused stomach pain, as usual, for the first 1-1/2 hours of the bike segment—almost until I reached Eldon. While I didn't feel like eating or drinking at this point, I forced myself to do so because of the problems I would face if I didn't. However, I don't believe I ate or drank as much as I should have. I only ate part of a PowerBar and half a banana before reaching Eldon.
- At Eldon (30-mile mark), I took two Endurolytes, a Race Cap, a gel and half a banana with water.
- Ten miles past Eldon (mile 40), on the hilliest section of the course, I suffered debilitating cramps in my quadriceps as I got up off the seat to climb a hill into the stiff 10-15 headwind. Since I had taken in the electrolytes in Eldon, I thought that the cramps might have been caused by inadequate hydration following the

swim. I realized that I'd better do something quickly, or I might not be able to finish the race—my absolute worst nightmare. I started drinking more Gatorade and ate some peanut butter and crackers right away. At the very next aid station, I took two more Endurolytes, ate a banana and picked up more Gatorade. At nearly every aid station later on the bike course, I consumed Endurolytes, a gel and/or a banana. I didn't have any more cramps (though at times I thought I was on the verge, so I took it easy) and I never seemed to run out of energy.

- On the run course, I drank water or Gatorade at nearly every aid station and took Endurolytes and/or a banana at most of them until mile 18. At mile 18, I ate a hamburger and drank some soda. I drank soda at nearly every station thereafter, but ate very little.
- Overall, my nutrition/hydration seemed to work well except, perhaps, for not being as diligent as I should have been during the early part of the bike course when my stomach was hurting.

Comfort

- I spread Body Glide on in T-1. No problems on the bike.
- I applied Vaseline between my legs in T-2 to avoid chafing. It worked fine.
- On the bike, I first urinated at about the 50-mile mark. I again stopped to urinate at mile 70, 85 and 100, so I felt that I was adequately hydrated. On the run, I also stopped a number of times to urinate.

Race goal

- My goal was simply to finish. After all the local support and publicity, my worst nightmare would have been not finishing. It would take a full year to redeem myself, and in the meantime I would have to live with all of the doubts about finishing next year and the self-flagellation over what I did wrong.
- Before the race, I privately guessed that I would finish in about 14 hours—1:30 on the swim, 7:30 on the bike and 5:00 on the marathon. It turns out that the additional 47 minutes to complete the course was pretty much due to an additional 17 minutes on the bike and a total of 27 minutes in transition.
- I “raced” as if I was the only one on the course. Never did I alter my race because of what others were doing.

Swim Performance

- I finished in 1:22, ranking 82 out of 131 finishers and 8 of 12 in my age group. I was able to swim the entire course using freestyle. That surprised me. I thought I'd have to resort to using some backstroke since this swim was one-third longer than my longest nonstop swim. I figure the wetsuit was the reason that I was able to do as well as I did. For some reason, I didn't have any upper arm or shoulder discomfort as I usually do during the first 800 yards of a swim.
- While I was pleased with my swim time, the swim was not really enjoyable. The distance seemed like an eternity.
- I'm glad I wore my tinted goggles. On the second half of the course, I was staring into the sun whenever I turned my head to breathe.

Swim-to-bike transition

- I had some difficulty getting my “legs” as I was trying to exit the water, and although I headed to T-1 at a quick pace, I couldn’t sprint to it like some people could.
- Inside the changing tent, I changed as quickly as I could, but I made sure I didn’t forget something important.
- My 13:37 transition time was about 5 or 6 minutes slower than most, so there’s considerable room for improvement.

Bike Performance

- I finished the bike course in 7:47, an average of 14.4 miles per hour. This was very slow compared to the rest of the field—I was 121 out of 131 overall and 11 of 12 in my age group. This was really the story of my day’s performance. If I am going to substantially improve my performance at next year’s Ultramax, it will have to be in the bike segment.
- I think there are four reasons for my pathetic bike performance. First, I didn’t get my bicycle until 7 months before Ultramax, so I didn’t have as much experience as my competitors. Second, I probably spent too much time on stationary bike machines and not enough on the bike itself. Third, when I had the episode with cramps, I rode more conservatively for the next 30 miles. Finally, I stopped for too long at many of the aid stations. I figure that I spent 30 minutes stopped at the aid stations. Knocking 20 minutes off of my time at the aid stations would raise my average speed to 15 mph. Another reason for my slow time—although it affected everyone else—was the strong wind on the northern part of the course.
- I wonder if riding a tri-bike would improve my bike performance significantly?
- Aid stations:
 - #1 Y Road - started eating PowerBar
 - #2 V Road - discarded uneaten half of PowerBar; ate a banana
 - #3 Eldon - banana, Endurolytes, gel
 - #4 CC - banana, Endurolytes (first station after cramps)
 - #5 High Point - gel or banana
 - #6 C - used porta-potty; Endurolytes, potato chips
 - #7 E (south) - banana
 - #8 Latham - used porta-potty; gel, Endurolytes
 - #9 E (south) - banana
 - #10 C - used porta-potty
 - #11 CC - stop for food
 - #12 Eldon - used porta-potty, gel, banana
 - #13 V Road - no stop

Bike-to-run transition

- Like T-1, this too was very slow at 14:34—5-6 minutes slower than the average. I think some of the time is due to trying to be too organized or careful about getting changed and neatly putting my bike stuff away.

Run Performance

- Before the race, I figured I could do the marathon in five hours, although I was hoping I could do it in 4:30 if my legs felt strong after the bike segment. I finished the marathon in a disappointing 5:07:50 (11:45 per mile), 70 out of 131 overall and 8 of 12 in my age group.
- With my bike segment being so slow, and having much more running experience than cycling or swimming, I thought that I might have been able to do much better than I did. I probably ran half the 26.2 miles. I could probably have run more, but I didn't want to take an excessive risk of not finishing.
- I walked the hill at the start of the marathon—about the first $\frac{3}{4}$ mile. I then alternated periods of running and walking until mile 18. I walked most of the uphills for fear of cramping up. At mile 18, my legs refused to run anymore.
- At mile 22, my watch read 14:07. I suddenly set a goal of finishing under 15 hours since anything under 15 hours sound so much better than anything over it. I guess walking miles 18 to 22 gave my legs enough of a chance to recover, since I was able to run most of the remaining 4.2 miles.
- Aid stations:

T-2	
Miles 1,12,14,25	LOFPD
Miles 2,15	MM (south side)
Miles 3,5,7,17,19,22	“Apex”
Miles 4,18	Grand Point (south)
Miles 6,21	Grand Point (north)
Miles 8,23	MM (north side)
Miles 10,24	Toll booth
Mile 13	Halfway, finish line area
- I didn't eat a lot of “real” food—mostly gels and bananas every so often with water or Gatorade. I ate a hamburger at around mile 18. I started drinking soda at mile 18.
- I used the porta-potty at least seven times—miles 2, 4, 8, 13, 15, 18 and 23.

Memorable moments

- There were lots and lots of memorable moments during the event. That's not unusual for an event that started at 7:45 in the morning and ended (for me) at 10:30 that evening.
- Waiting in the water for the swim start, with hundreds of spectators around, was so strange. Surprisingly, I really wasn't nervous at all despite the barrage of thoughts of what the day might bring.
- Exiting the swim was also strange. I was trying to stand upright but almost fell down. I was also smiling because I was so glad to finally get out of the water—2.4 miles is a LONG way to swim—and because the swim was my weakest segment.
- Leg cramps at mile 40 on the bike were really disturbing. I was simply trying to gain some speed on a hill climb by getting up off my bike seat. The cramps in my quadriceps were so sudden and debilitating that I basically fell back down onto the seat. At first I thought I was going to be unable to maintain enough speed,

and fall over. Somehow, I was able to continue pedaling up the hill. Mentally, though, it was a nightmare. With 72 miles still to ride and 26.2 miles still to run, I didn't know if I was going to make it. It wasn't until I completed the next 12 miles—the hilliest part of the bike course—that I felt I was out of the woods.

- A young volunteer at the aid station in High Point hollered “Go Jim” when I stopped there. I thought perhaps he had heard about me from the local newspaper articles or radio interview. It turns out he was just checking out our names from the list of racers as we came through. It was really neat, though.
- Asking the police officers at the intersection of Highways C and E to do me a favor and shoot me gave them a great laugh.
- There was one car of spectators that I saw several times along the bike route. They would stop and cheer, then go to another spot and do the same. I noticed the Texas license plates on their car as they passed me several times. On Highway C, they were parked in a driveway, and I waved to them and hollered that I used to live in Texas. They cheered wildly.
- On the return trip through Eldon, I stopped to use the porta-potty. As I headed out on my bike, I hear “Jimmy!” and look up to see Mick McCoy. The rest of the gang was there as well. I acknowledged them and asked Gary Rekowski to give me a beer before going on.
- The weather forecast said nothing about rain on race day. When I was heading back toward Eldon, I noticed that there were some dark clouds in the direction of the Lake area. As I was coming down the steep hill on Bagnell Dam Boulevard to cross over Bagnell Dam, it started raining. The shower was over by the time I reached the transition area. It was the first time I had ridden my bike in the rain. What concerned me most was knowing that I would have to negotiate the sharpest, most dangerous turn on the entire bike course during the rain. Fortunately, everything went OK. In fact, I was lucky that the rain occurred at the very end of the bike segment rather than during the marathon. Had I finished the bike segment 15 minutes earlier, I would have started the marathon with wet shoes and socks. That could have been very bad.
- As I was beginning the marathon, I passed by the Rock Island bar on the Bagnell Dam strip and saw Willie, Gary, Patty, Mick, Carole, and Doug and Cindy Westhoff sitting on the front porch. At the halfway point, I grabbed my disposable camera and, as I passed them again, I stopped, stepped off the course, and snapped a picture of them sitting there. They went crazy with laughter.
- Seeing “Go Jim” on the sign in front of the Lake Ozark Fire Protection District headquarters on Bagnell Dam Blvd was a big surprise. I had no idea who might have done it until I remembered that Tony Dudley worked for the District. He did the embroidery work on my running jersey at Quilter's Cove Embroidery, which I believe is owned by his wife, Bev.
- At mile 18 of the marathon, I saw several people attending to a racer who was on the ground with cramps and feeling chilled. It was completely dark except for their flashlight. I saw the ambulance come a few minutes later. It was a stark reminder that I was not yet certain of finishing.
- On my last pass through the “apex” (on mile 22 of the marathon), I stopped at the race announcer's vehicle where the audio system was set up and asked him if he

would make an announcement for me. He put the microphone in front of me and I said to the volunteers and spectators there, "I want to thank all of you for being out here tonight helping me make my Ironman dream come true". The reaction was fantastic.

- Making that last turn onto Bagnell Dam Boulevard toward the finish line was a great feeling. It was all downhill from there and I could crawl to the finish line if I had to. At that point I knew for certain that I would be an Ironman within just a few minutes.
- Entering the finisher's chute. I snapped some photos with my disposable camera, and collected some high fives from the few spectators who were still around.
- I crossed the finish line and felt a HUGE sense of relief and accomplishment. I had just reached the goal I had set one year earlier after hundreds of hours of training and all the pain, dreams and sacrifices.
- On Monday following the event, I called in to KRMS' "Morning Magazine" talk show to thank them for their coverage of the race. Ed Foxmier and Kevin Burns were hosting the show that day. Bill Rabeor, the sports director, joined them after my call was taken. It was a great conversation about the event and my experiences. I only wish I had recorded it.

Physical effects

- I suffered stomach pain from air swallowed during the swim. The pain lasted from the start of the bike segment until I nearly reached Eldon.
- The above-mentioned cramps at mile 40 of the bike segment. I doubt that I would have experienced the cramps if I had not been going up a tough hill and into the wind. (Is it just a coincidence that the leg cramps I suffered at the end of the bike segment during the Half Max came on while going up the steep hills after riding 8 miles straight into 15-20 mph winds?)
- My legs refused to run at mile 18 of the marathon, but recovered enough at mile 22 to enable me to run the rest of the way at a pace of about 9 minutes per mile.
- At the finish line, the only real soreness I had was in my quadriceps. After sitting down for a few minutes in the medical tent, I got up to leave and noticed increasing tightness behind and below my right knee. Within hours, the pain was pretty bad and bending the knee was difficult. I wasn't sure if it was muscle, ligament or tendon related. I guess the cessation of activity caused the inflammation and pain to occur. I was extremely worried that I had suffered a bad injury. I did everything I could over the next few weeks to help it heal. The pain was gone in about three or four weeks, except that there was still some discomfort noticeable after a hard training session.

Miscellaneous

- I need to find a better way of carrying food, spares and stuff on the bike. I carried more stuff than I ended up needing, but I still need to work on this.
- I need to be prepared for a rain shower.

Ways to improve in 2004

- Set a reasonable time goal. A time goal will keep me from being too leisurely, especially at the aid stations and in transition, and keep me focused on the fact that this is a race.
- Establish a more definitive nutrition/hydration plan, especially in the early part of the bike segment.
- Put in a LOT more training miles on the bicycle over the next year, even if it is at the expense of training time for the swim and run. Train on hills to build leg strength and endurance, and try to do more long rides. Also, build leg strength on the weight and step machines at the health club.